

Loop 202: wrong freeway, wrong place

[Commentary by Greta C. Rogers | Special to the AFN](#)

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Mark your calendars for June 25, 2008 at Pecos Center, 6 to 8 p.m., for a presentation to the community by the Arizona Department of Transportation on the present status of the South Mountain Freeway (SMF) plan. ADOT has been "working" on this project for six and a half years with many questions still unanswered.

This will be ADOT's first "coming out" at a community-wide meeting since winter 2005. Public deliberation on the SMF began February 2002 with the convening of the original South Mountain Community Action Team (CAT) in Laveen at the historic school house. CAT is a volunteer representative group of citizens from the communities southwest of Phoenix and Ahwatukee to be impacted by this leg of Route 202.

The SMF portion of Route 202 has been a dotted line on a MAG map since 1982, 26 years. Not only has historic growth and change occurred in Metro Phoenix since 1982, Ahwatukee has more than doubled in population and is now 98% built out. This causes real questions about feasibility of this proposed 10-lane freeway, a commercial interstate truck bypass, for health, safety and environmental reasons to the community as a whole.

Lakewood, the largest neighborhood adjacent to the proposed SMF at Pecos Road right-of-way, will be most directly impacted, including five schools, four within two blocks of the freeway, its noise, CO2 emissions, diesel odors, and high-count dust particulates. All these will be in excess of recommended maximum EPA health safety standards.

In addition to the foregoing, ADOT proposes to blow up a 200 foot wide pass through South Mountain, a permanent desecration of South Mountain Park Preserve. This will enable connection of I-10 East to I-10 West in Phoenix. This connection will also become part of the federally approved Canamex International Highway, a freight route between Canada, U.S.A. and Mexico.

At ADOT's current cost estimate for the I-10/SMF link, \$1.7 billion for 22 mile length, this runs \$77.3 million per mile; this estimate was calculated in 2006. Therefore, at today's increased cost, a figure of \$2 billion to build this SMF link is realistic, and ADOT is not close to ready with plans to be able to get contracts, and no time frame to do so was available at the last CAT meeting in May 2008. If the 2006 cost estimate were realistic, now it's meaningless and no one's time saved with the bypass is worth such profligacy.

Attend the ADOT Ahwatukee meeting. Ask for facts. Ask for truth. Community quality of life hangs in the balance.

Greta C. Rogers is a founding member of PARC - Protecting Arizona's Resources and Children.